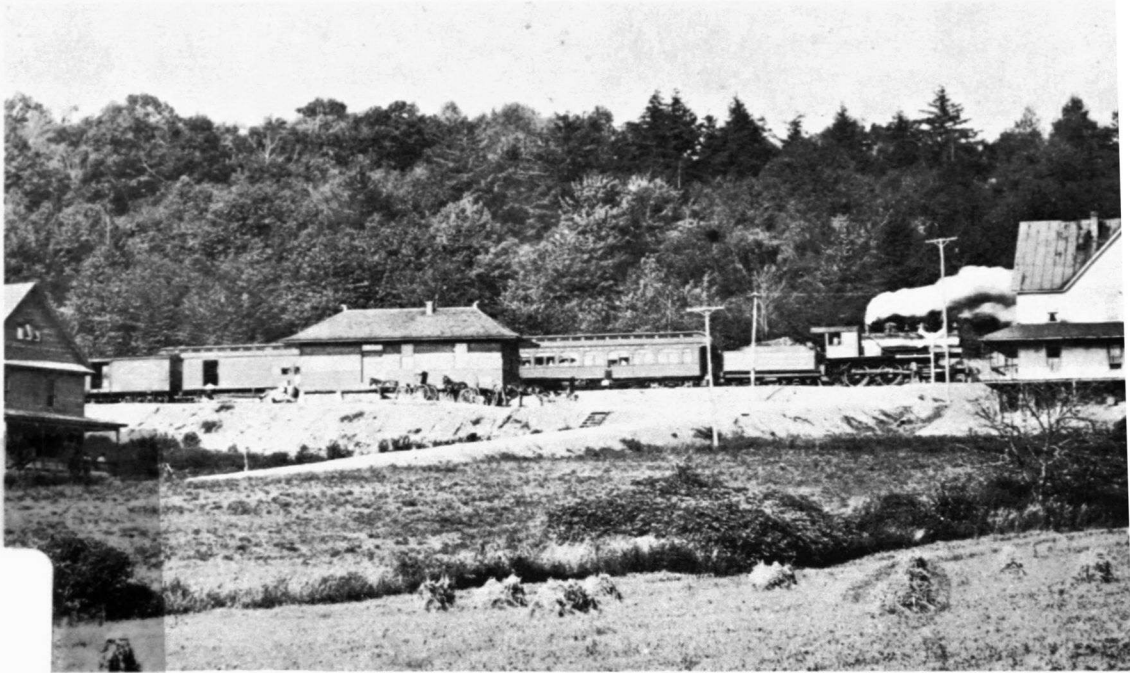


A HISTORY OF THE TOWN OF BOSTON



Buffalo and Susquehanna Railroad Station.

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by Charles B. Bradley

When the first settler arrived in Boston and built his cabin close to where Liebler Road intersects Route 219, nearby was an opening in the forest of about 30 acres. Here was an earthen embankment about two feet high, with a ditch on the outside about two feet deep, enclosing a space of about two and a half acres. This undoubtedly marked the site of an old palisaded village of the Seneca Indians. It is also recorded that there was a trail from

this site to where Hamburg now is and from there along the ridge, where Pleasant Avenue leads to the lake. By the time the settlers arrived here the Indians were living on reservations at Buffalo, Cattaraugus Creek or elsewhere, but occasionally they would pass through the valley.

Charles Johnson, who arrived in 1803, chose his land because of the opening in the forest which he could put under cultivation without the labor of clearing it. Most of the settlers had to cut and burn the trees before they

could sow wheat or corn. The trees were cut and as soon as they were dry enough, burned. Wood ashes could be gathered, water leached through them to secure lye, which could then be boiled down to produce "black salts," or potash, which could be sold. This was often the first and only cash producing product which the settler could hope for until his crop of wheat or corn could be harvested.

Meat could be had if the pioneer was handy with his gun. Deer, bear, racoons, rabbits, partridges, and wild turkeys were all present in the woods, and wildcats and wolves were ready to kill the cows if they wandered far afield. Before the fields and pastures were cleared and fenced, all the cattle wore bells to frighten off these animals and so that the stock could be located in the woods and brought home to yard or barn for the night. Bears were partial to pork and the pig pens had to be high and strong to protect the occupants.

The Holland Land Company owned all this land and was so eager to sell it that credit was given settlers if they would clear some land, build a cabin, and raise crops. The settler "articled" his land; that is, he entered into a contract to make the required improvements on his land and to pay an agreed sum each year until principal and interest were paid in full, when he would receive his deed. Land sold from \$2.00 to \$2.50 per acre.

The log cabin usually had holes for windows, sometimes covered with cloth in winter, as glass was an expensive luxury. A blanket often served for a door. A fireplace of stone or sticks and clay was usually built but some just left an opening in the roof and built a fire on the earth floor.

In the fall of 1803 Charles and Oliver Johnson, brothers, made the first purchase of land in Boston, paying \$2.25 per acre. The following spring Charles came into the valley with his family. Oliver Johnson, Samuel Eaton, and Samuel Beebe came a little later, settling nearby at the north. In 1809 a grist mill was erected by Joseph Yaw, probably where Boston Village now stands. In 1811 a Free Will Baptist Church was organized, and soon after built a church which stood east of Route 219, between Liebler Road and Maplewood Cemetery.

The War of 1812 brought dismay to the settlers as it was feared that the Indians, stirred by the British, would raid the settlement. Charles Johnson was captain of the militia (afterward a colonel). Joseph Palmer's barn was barricaded in 1813.

Soon after the war the Torrey family located in what is now Boston Village, long known as Torrey's Corners. Captain Torrey kept a tavern there, and his sons Erastus and Uriah became prominent citizens. Talcott Patchin, who served in the regular army and was wounded at the Battle of Chippewa, married a daughter of Richard Cary and settled north of the settlement later to bear his name.

The Town of Boston was formed on April 5, 1817, by dividing the Town of Eden. The name was doubtless borrowed from Massachusetts as New England place-names are repeated in many states all the way to Oregon. The first town meeting was held the next year, and Samuel Abbott was elected supervisor. Other officers elected were: town clerk, two poor masters, three assessors, four commissioners of highways, one collector, three commissioners of com-



mon schools, two constables, and twelve overseers of highways. From this record it is clear that considerable settlement of the town had taken place, and we read that there were 153 taxable inhabitants in the town in 1818. Fifty dollars was to be raised by taxation to cover town expenses. Quakers were taxed four dollars each in lieu of military service. One result of this meeting was a law that, "Any person who shall suffer a stalk of Canada thistle to bloom on his or her lot or farm shall pay a fine of fifty cents for each and every blossom to any person suing for the same." Evidently there were weeds in the wilderness and foreigners at that.

A Presbyterian Church was organized here at about 1811, and in 1837 Solomon Fosdick and his son, John Spencer, built the building which still stands on the west side of Route 219 in the Village of Boston. This building, known as St. Paul's, has been used by several denominations. As early as 1814 a Baptist organization existed in Torrey's Corners, and in 1834 they erected a church building just south of where St. Paul's now stands, but this was torn down many years ago.

John Twinning and Benjamin Kester with some other Quakers settled at what came to be known as North Boston. A sawmill operated there as early as 1816, and a tavern was opened soon after. There was a family of Thayers: the father, Israel Thayer, and three sons, Nelson, Israel, Jr., and Isaac. They were a poor family and had borrowed money from a boarder, John Love. He lived with them when not sailing the lakes in summer or peddling in winter. In the fall of 1824 John Love disappeared after staying for a time with the Thayers. Shortly after this they tried to collect debts owed to Love, and when they produced a power of attorney, which was obviously forged, suspicion of foul play was aroused. The authorities offered a reward of \$10 to anyone who could find Love's body. After an all-day search it was found a few yards from the cabin of Israel, Jr., where it was buried in a shallow grave with some brush thrown over it.

All four Thayers were arrested, and the boys confessed that they had murdered John Love. The father was freed but the three sons were hung on the west side of Niagara Square in Buffalo on June 7, 1825. This execution attracted a large crowd to whom a sermon

was preached before the hanging. This story is the most widely known of any event in the history of Boston.

We do not know when the first school was opened in the town, but since there were three commissioners of common schools elected in 1818 there evidently were schools operating or contemplated. The early schools were very elementary and were open for only a few weeks in the year as the children were kept busy at home most of the year.

The first settlement was made in the center of the township, and this hamlet was called Boston Centre for many years. Here Talcott Patchin operated his tannery for about 10 years; then he decided to try a fresh start in life and went south.

In 1850 the citizens of Boston Centre petitioned for a post office but were told to select another name to avoid confusion with Boston and North Boston. They selected Patchin as the name of their post office in honor of their former neighbor.

There used to be a bell factory in Boston Village, operated by the Yaw



The old schoolhouse, now the Boston Free Library.



John Love Monument.

family. It was the largest bell factory in the United States making 500 cow and sheep bells a day besides staples and hasps. We do not know when it started nor when it closed, but an atlas of 1866 shows the factory just below the Catholic Cemetery across the creek from Boston. Another atlas of 1880 shows that it had been moved east of the main road a little north of Boston Cross Road. There are a few of the old bells in the valley, but the business died when the farmers finished clearing and fencing their pastures.

Ambrose Yaw had a daughter, Ellen Beach Yaw, born in 1868, in the house east of Naber's store on the Boston Cross Road, who was to become perhaps the widest known Bostonian. She developed a splendid voice, and, after study in Europe, she traveled all over the United States and Europe doing concert singing. She sang soprano and

could hit a higher note than any other singer of her time.

As hemlock trees were plentiful here and the bark was used to tan hides into leather, tanneries were built all over the country. There was a tannery, previous to 1870, on the creek bank in Boston Village, and there were two others in Boston Centre. After the hemlock trees were cut off and chemical tanning developed, all these tanneries went out of business.

The road from Hamburg to Springville probably follows the old Indian trail as far as that extended, and beyond that point the early settlers blazed a trail following the route of least resistance. By 1812 a road was open to Springville, but from the bridge south of Boston Village it followed the route of the Trevett Road. It was not until 1840 or 1841 that the present route of the State Road was opened. As the road was the only means of contact with the larger settlements it was a community project to maintain and improve it. Road taxes were worked out instead of being paid in cash. It was a narrow dirt road until about 1850, when a private company took it over and built a plank road for the use of

which toll was collected. A toll house stood just north of Howard Cary's house, south of Liebler Road. Sawed timbers, three or four inches thick, were laid across the road forming a paved surface which, when new, seemed a great improvement over the mud and dust of the old highway. But the planks soon warped and curled up and broke in weak spots so that the road deteriorated rapidly. In 10 or 12 years the company gave up trying to keep the road in repair, and its upkeep reverted to the town. Probably much of it was buried under gravel. A few years ago the remains of this road was uncovered, in a ditch, several feet below the present highway. Finally in 1909, the State took over this road, and a paved road was built. This and the advent of the automobile began to change the whole picture of the countryside.

Before the days of paved roads and automobiles the people of the town depended upon local stores and shops to supply their needs. Stores, taverns, and post office had to be within easy driving distance of the farm, and this accounts for the three hamlets: Boston, Patchin, and North Boston, each with its post office.

About 1890 there were in the Village of Boston the following places of business: one general store, a grocery store with the post office, four shoe shops, four blacksmith shops, two hotels, a wagon shop, a hardware and tin shop, a saw mill, a grist mill, a jewelry store, a harness shop, a meat market, and a telegraph office. There was a doctor, a lawyer, carpenters and masons, all dependent on the patronage of those living in and around the Village. A horse drawn stage ran from Hamburg to Springville daily. Several cheese fac-



Richard Cary house, built about 1835.



Boston Creamery.

ories operated outside the Village within easy hauling distance of the farms, where milk was proving to be the best paying product.

In 1880 a pipe line had been laid from Pennsylvania to Buffalo to bring crude oil to the refinery. This line passes through Boston and is still in use, with a daily capacity of 5,000 barrels. Several wells were drilled in the town in the hope of striking oil but none were successful. It was several years later that gas producing wells were drilled, although there were several springs in Boston which gave off gas.

The Boston Fire Company was formed in the fall of 1908, and at a later date a company was organized in Patchin. Beginning with old fashioned hand pumps these companies have repeatedly acquired improved equipment. Today the town has three well

equipped fire fighting organizations with a mutual aid arrangement.

In 1906 people were delighted when the Goodyear Brothers of Buffalo began operating the railroad from Buffalo to Wellsville. This railroad formed a connection between railroads, saw mills, and coal mines owned by the Goodyears in Pennsylvania, and their docks and steamships on the lakes. It was advertised as the "scenic route" and was busy with both passenger and freight traffic, but it lasted only 10 years as the whole Goodyear empire began to crumble. In 1916 the tracks and bridges were sold as junk, at wartime prices, and later most of it was shipped to France but, it is said, part of it was sunk in the Atlantic by German submarines. The loss of the railroad was a dire blow to the prosperity of the valley, but fortunately motor vehicles soon provided shipping facilities to take its place.

When the railroad was being built in 1904, the contractor on this section wanted a telephone so that he would not have to drive to Hamburg each time he needed to contact his employer or order supplies. He interested Frank X. Weber, and together they visited the telephone companies in Hamburg and Buffalo, but they were not willing to extend their lines as they did not think there would be enough subscribers to make a line pay. Frank X. Weber, Fred Frank, and Jacob Broadbeck organized the Boston Valley Telephone Company and sold shares for \$10, only one to a person. These men, with some help, set the poles and strung the wires.

Mr. Corbit, the railroad contractor, was the first to have a telephone installed. It was planned to have one telephone each in North Boston, Patchin, and Boston, but by the time the line was finished there were several subscribers. Eventually there were 17 lines extended as far as Colden, West Falls, New Oregon, and halfway to Springville. In 1925 there were 342 telephones in operation, and 351 shares had been sold. This local company operated from 1905 to 1932 and paid an average dividend of more than 10%. On January 1, 1932, the Bell Telephone Company took over the lines after paying the stockholders \$32,000.

When in 1908 the rural free delivery of mail was started in Boston, Howard Owen began delivering mail with a horse and buggy. He continued his daily rounds until 1957, but in the later years he used an automobile.

Each year the Boston Fire Company has held a carnival to raise money to carry on their work. Beginning in

1949 and continuing until 1959, international bicycle races were held in connection with the carnival at Patchin. These were arranged by Ted Nowak and resulted in two Olympic trials and attracted considerable interest of sports fans.

After the death of Dr. Jennings a memorial library was started in the Village of Boston in 1939, with Leland Dye as president. In 1947 a movement was started by George Stein which resulted in the formation of the Boston Free Library Association. A library was opened in the old fire house on the Boston Cross Road. In January 1949 this library became a part of the county system and since then has operated under contract with the Buffalo and Erie County Public Library. In 1955 the library moved into the remodeled brick schoolhouse on the State Road.

The economy of Boston has changed greatly over the years. After the difficult times of early settlement it developed as a general farming area.



*Old Universalist Church in Patchin,
now the Town Hall.*

Sheep, producing wool and mutton, were profitable for a time; but as the land was cleared and put under cultivation, it became evident that the hill farms were best adapted to milk production, potatoes and cabbage, while the richer land of the valley was suitable for more diverse crops. Fruit growing became popular, and at one time there were extensive apple orchards in the valley. As the hill farms were cultivated, the top soil washed away, and they became unproductive. Many of these farms on the west hill were bought by Polish emigrants, who by hard work and long hours have suc-

ceeded in making a living in spite of the poor soil.

The automobile has brought the city nearer, and more and more of the residents of the town have found employment in the industries of the city to supplement or take the place of the farm. This has changed the character of Boston to a considerable degree. The beauty of our countryside has long been recognized. Many city dwellers are moving into the town, and building developments are covering the farm lands of the past. It now looks as if within a few years it will become a typical suburban community.

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